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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

From: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: MAJOR DEFENSE OPTIONS

Cambridge, Massachusetts  
March 22, 1961

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DECLASSIFIED	E.O. 12356, SEC. 3.4
NLK-81-S1	
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## I. General Considerations

The Psychological Problem. Since the end of World War II military technology has undergone at least three major revolutions, greater in scope than any technological upheaval of previous generations: the discovery of the atom bomb; the emergence of thermo-nuclear weapons; the development of long-range missiles. As a result, there is no really valid experience on which to draw in strategic planning. Indeed, the traditional military expertise may, if anything, be an obstacle to understanding present trends. The "common sense" solution is likely to be wrong for it is based on patterns of thought in need of being transcended. At every level, what is thought about the significance of modern weapons is more important than the "real" power relationship; or, put more accurately, the assessment of the role of modern weapons is ~~their~~ chief significance.

When deterrence depends on what is essentially a conjecture regarding unprecedented technological developments, military policy may fail for any one of three reasons: (a) because the military staffs are unable to formulate a coherent doctrine or do not understand the political framework in which they must operate; (b) because the political leadership has been furnished a military capability which is difficult to translate into policy or (c) because the two sides interpret available data differently so that what one side considers an unacceptable risk is not so considered by the other or else is disbelieved.

I shall discuss each of these briefly:

a. Strategic Doctrine and the Military Services. Until power is used, it has been said, it is what people think it is. Because there is so little

experience on which to build, strategic doctrine becomes more important than ever. Strategic doctrine defines the likely dangers and how to deal with them, or the desirable goals and how to attain them. If sufficiently concrete, it should enable the political and military leadership to set up a pattern of response in advance of crises and thus free energies for dealing with the really unforeseen or for creative actions.

Americans tend to consider doctrine to be identical with dogmatism and to represent a straitjacket. I would argue that properly conceived, doctrine is the prerequisite for flexibility. In its absence, more energy is expended on determining where we are than on defining a sense of direction. Actions have to be improvised under the pressure of events. Every problem becomes a special case.

The Romans panicked when first confronted with Hannibal's elephants as the Greeks had previously when faced with the Macedonian phalanx. The reason was not that the elephants or the phalanx were unbeatable. It was above all that their military use had never been considered. Therefore, no pattern of response existed and the situation was too novel to permit effective improvisation. In time the Romans mastered both the phalanx and the elephants by developing a doctrine and training to cope with them.

When the tools of power and the methods of using them diplomatically are so novel, only the most careful advance planning can prevent serious, perhaps catastrophic, mistakes. The test of adequacy of a strategic doctrine is whether the challenges to which it addresses itself are in

fact the most frequent. If they are not, the strategic doctrine will compound rigidities inherent in any improvisation. If they are, it will confer assurance and a sense of direction.

There have been two difficulties with American strategic doctrine since World War II:

1. Insofar as we have had an agreed doctrine, we have been best prepared for the kind of war we are least likely to conduct: a massive first strike against the aggressor. And even here, the undoubted absolute power which we have generated has been vitiated by a lack of precision as to the nature of general war--a point I will discuss later.
2. The disagreement about strategy among the services and the struggle over roles and missions has further deprived us both of flexibility and direction. Each service has had a tendency to state requirements designed to make the others dispensable and to develop war plans with a minimum of coordination with the other services. Or put another way: the existing definition of strategic objectives has produced a litany of slogans like "general war," "limited war," "determine Soviet intentions" etc., so vague that each service has had a maximum latitude to emphasize its own preferred strategy.

The results have not been altogether bad. The "sabotage by obfuscation" has prevented the New Look from being pressed to its logical, indeed its avowed, conclusions. It gives us a much better base for recasting our strategy than would have been the case had the decisions of the Eisenhower Administration been in fact carried out. Yet evasion of national policy cannot be permitted to continue even if occasionally the results are better than expected. Reassessing and making precise our

strategic doctrine seem to me priority items. I shall discuss below possible means of achieving this end.

b. Strategic Doctrine and the Political Leadership. Few aspects of the contemporary world have been harder to grasp by the traditional military professional than the notion that there no longer exists any purely military solution, even if war should break out. The pattern of asking the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the "military" ingredient and the State Department for the diplomatic component of policy has produced abstractness in both. It has obscured the fact that a military capability which is not adequately understood by the political leadership or in which the political leadership can have no confidence will lose a great deal, if not all, of its effectiveness. Or else, the military planning will turn into a straitjacket for political decisions instead of being a tool of them.

Let me illustrate this with a current controversy--that of counter-force versus finite deterrence: One objection to heavy reliance on a counterforce strategy is the near impossibility of the military ever demonstrating a counterforce capability to the political leadership. The lack of experience with modern weapons, the gaps in our knowledge about the location of Soviet missile sites is bound to produce serious doubts about the efficacy of a strategy of a massive all-out strike--all the more as the penalty for a mistake is national catastrophe and as even success is relative: it is hard to conceive a victory which does not produce several million casualties. I shall return to this problem when discussing the various notions of general war.

c. Strategy and Deterrence. To be effective for purposes of deterrence, our military capability must produce the consequences in the mind of the

potential aggressor which we are aiming for. The important standard of what risks are unacceptable is the aggressor's, not ours. An action intended as bluff but taken seriously is more useful than an action intended seriously but interpreted as bluff. Thus, returning to the previous example, even if we possessed a capability for an effective first strike the aggressor might not credit it. In that case, deterrence could easily fail. As the nuclear age develops, it will become increasingly difficult, for reasons I will discuss later to demonstrate both readiness and determination to strike.

## II. Major Strategic Options for General War.

Perhaps no other phrase is more widely used in strategy papers than "general war." It is the basis of deterrence. It is considered the ultimate sanction of aggression. With respect to some problems, such as Berlin, our contingency planning has as its objective to bring home to the Soviets, if they harass or blockade Berlin, the increased danger of general nuclear war. Nevertheless, the nature of general war, and its relationship to diplomacy, has received insufficient attention. The problem of command and control, the methods of threatening the imminence of war or the means to end it have been submerged in vague phrases. In the recent Defense Department memorandum, there is some discussion of the need for selectivity and limiting damage--but this seems to me the bare outline of what needs to be filled in by more detailed planning.

The following attempts a schematic outline of some major options. For purposes of discussion these have been more sharply delimited than they really are. For many reasons I would question the wisdom of forcing the Defense Department to make a theoretical choice (as I will explain later). It does seem to me important for the political leadership to clarify the implications of the tools at its disposal.

A. Counterforce--Second Strike. Some Air Force officers--mostly confined to SAC--hold the view that we could design our strategic force in such a way that we are capable of winning a general war even after we have been the victims of a surprise attack. It is not easy to ascribe concrete meaning to this theory and particularly to its definition of "winning." Unless we assume surpassing Soviet ineptitude, a Soviet surprise attack could not fail to inflict enormous devastation on us.

Most of the Soviet missiles would have been launched. The remainder as well as the bombing force would be in a high state of alert.

A pure counterforce strategy after a Soviet first strike would require a retaliatory force of enormous size and a vast active defense as well as civil defense program. Such an effort could not be maintained without stripping ourselves of limited war forces and even then its practical utility would be highly doubtful. It makes sense only on the assumption of a nearly 100 per cent effective active air defense and in that case, the Communists would have to be extremely foolish to attack. Since this course is not likely to be pursued and requires force levels several magnitudes greater than any now envisaged, the strategic and political implications of a counterforce second-strike capability will not be discussed further.

B. Counterforce-First Strike. This presupposes a capability to win a general war by a massive first blow. ("First" here refers to the initiation of general war. It assumes very substantive Communist provocation.) Since on this assumption we would initiate the general war, the force requirements of offensive power, active and civil defense are somewhat smaller than for the strategy described earlier.

From a purely strategic point of view a capability for a decisive first-strike is the most desirable of all postures. If the retaliatory force is well protected, the Soviets could not profit from preemtive attack because, by hypothesis, our counterblow would still inflict intolerable damage. And they would have to be cautious about limited aggression since this might trigger a potentially decisive United States first-strike. Therefore many proponents of this strategy hold that

substantial limited war forces are either unnecessary or dangerous; unnecessary because limited aggression, according to their view, is dealt with most effectively by a massive United States first strike; dangerous because substantial limited war forces may give rise to doubts about our determination to resort to general war in response to local aggression. (This is the prevalent air force doctrine whatever they may state in policy papers. It is the conviction of almost all their staff officers.)

Nevertheless, for all its surface attractiveness this strategic concept suffers from serious shortcomings. Five difficulties exist:

a. The consequences of even a victorious general war may seem out of proportion to any given issue. During our atomic monopoly and our subsequent strategic superiority we in effect possessed a capability to win by striking first. Yet this did not prevent a whole series of Soviet provocations. And when we resisted we did so by means other than our predominant strategy. The reason was psychological, not military: we failed to invoke the strategy for which we were best prepared not because we were afraid to lose but because we did not want to pay the price of victory.

b. The best margin of superiority we can expect is likely to be too tenuous to permit the President to stake our national survival on it in every crisis or even in the face of fairly substantial provocations. The penalties for error are too great to permit resorting to an all-out war strategy in any except the most extreme emergencies. Anyone familiar with the disputes within the Defense Department about

the nature of strategy must doubt the ability of the Pentagon to make a foolproof demonstration of a first-strike capability.

c. This problem, serious enough within our government, will be even more difficult with respect to Communist aggression. It is not easy to see how a first-strike capability is demonstrated when the retaliatory forces are composed of missiles and it is likely in any case that such a demonstration would trigger a pre-emptive strike. The primary threat available is not military but psychological: to stake our prestige so deliberately, perhaps even recklessly, on certain issues that backing down will come to appear as intolerable provocation--a course of action difficult both for domestic reasons as well as from the point of view of alliance policy. I believe that the phrase "threaten general war" in all policy papers should be examined from the point of view of just how such a threat is carried out.

d. Obtaining a first-strike capability may be technically impossible and the superiority, if achieved, would be inherently transitory. It is one thing to maintain an existing strategic superiority, though the complexity of even this task should not be underrated. It is quite another to achieve such a superiority once one has fallen behind or even from a situation of parity. The opponent would have to be extremely inept to permit us to achieve a first-strike capability in these circumstances.

For the term of this Administration it seems that no projection of either our program or that of the Soviets would enable us to rely on a counterforce strategy. Even the minimum intelligence estimates--and for these purposes at least it seems unsafe to rely on them--indicate that for two or three years the Soviet Union will possess more long-range missiles than we. Even on the assumption of numerical parity, I would

judge that a reliable first-strike on our part is technically impossible. If two missiles are required to knock out an enemy missile--an assumption which favors us--it is clear that our missile force will be too small to take out Soviet retaliatory power. And airplanes are unreliable weapons against missiles because of their relatively long flying time from early warning lines to Soviet missile sites. This would enable the Soviets to fire their missiles before our planes have destroyed the launching sites. (There is at least sufficient doubt on this score for the President not to want to stake our survival on such a strategy.)

This may be an appropriate place to make clear my understanding of the "missile gap". Its significance is not that we have become vulnerable to surprise attack. It is rather that it makes explicit what technology would have brought about in any case: the bankruptcy of the doctrine of massive retaliation to deter local aggression.

It would be a mistake to believe that we can return to the position of strategic superiority by stepping up our missile program.

If we step up our program, the likely end result would be not an adequate first-strike capability but an intensification of the arms race. A convincing first strike capability is conceivable only on the assumption of a close to foolproof air defense system--a capability that has not yet been adequately described, much less developed. Moreover, even if a meaningful superiority were achieved at any given moment over this period, technology would cause it to be sufficiently transitory so that we could not stake our strategy on it.

e. The military and psychological difficulties are matched by political ones. In tense periods, a first-strike strategy is very difficult to utilize as a political weapon. As the retaliatory force must rely for its security on a high state of readiness, determination is not easily demonstrated by physical moves. And there is a psychological problem as well. If deterrence of general war has been effective for any length of time, it may be very hard to make an aggressor believe that one "really" means it this time. Moreover, if the threat is believed, it is likely to aggravate an already critical situation. At the least it would alert the opponent's defenses and this might well make the difference between success and failure. A first-strike counterforce strategy is most effective as an offensive military threat to be invoked essentially without warning. It is least useful for a country on the strategic defensive, both militarily and politically.

Finally, exclusive reliance on a counterforce first-strike capability may well doom arms control negotiations based on the notion of stable deterrence. Neither side could probably afford the inspection required and we could in that case not agree to a ceiling on the size of our retaliatory force.

C. Finite Deterrence. This strategic concept is based on the notion that deterrence is achieved not so much by the capability to threaten victory in general war as by the ability to inflict punishment unacceptable to the aggressor. According to this view, the aggressor will be deterred by the prospect of the destruction of objectives he values, most usually cities. The variations of this doctrine are great. The "minimum deterrence" version seeks to relate our force levels to the total number

of Soviet cities with a population above fifty thousand. Some--though a decreasing number--argue the merit of the threat of attack on most Soviet targets simultaneously. This school of thought would substitute the "uncertainty principle" for complete credibility--deterrence, they maintain, is produced not by the certainty that we will retaliate, but by the probability that we might.

The predominant concept now would seem to be some notion of finite deterrence coupled with a limited counterforce capability or at least a capability for selective retaliation. Selectivity, recommended in the recent Defense Department memorandum to you, is thought necessary as a means of limiting damage by giving us an opportunity to bargain. Moreover, depending on its size, the counterforce capability is useful to reduce the magnitude of any attack on the United States.

According to the advocates of finite deterrence, major emphasis should be placed on the security of the retaliatory force rather than on its ability to destroy the opponents striking power. The aim, it is held, is a capability to guarantee mutual suicide and this will be sufficient to deter general war. Active defense and to some extent, civil defense, are dangerous because if they succeed, they threaten to upset the strategic balance preventing any efforts to achieve arms control, and if they fail they represent a dangerous drain on resources.

Before analyzing the implications of "finite deterrence," it is important to note that some form of it is the most likely development over the next five years. As pointed out earlier, projection of our present programs promises a convincing counterforce capability. And no alternative

program promises more than an intensified arms race. The basic issue in the area of general war almost certainly will resolve itself into minimum deterrence (a pure counter-city capability) as against finite deterrence plus some counterforce capability (a counter-city capability with some other characteristics such as selectivity, accuracy and somewhat larger numbers than minimum deterrence would justify.) In either case finite deterrence can be said to exist when neither side can win by striking first because each side is capable of inflicting intolerable damage on its opponent even if it is the victim of surprise attack.

It then becomes important to define the implications of this situation both militarily and politically. For purposes of discussion, I will group all versions of finite deterrence together since the difference between them is one of degree, not of kind.

Whatever its form, finite deterrence renounces the possibility of victory in general war. This may be by choice or, more likely, because of the thrust of technology. Whatever the reason, the retaliatory forces can only guarantee a high degree of mutual damage. This is considered desirable by many. It provides the precondition of stable arms control agreements. It reduces the motive either for surprise or for pre-emptive attack. There are, however, penalties which must be recognized.

Most obviously, the impossibility of assigning a military outcome to general war may raise, indeed it has raised, the level of provocation which the Communist bloc may feel safe in risking. Henceforth, the penalty for local aggression will no longer be the fear of a massive United States retaliation--except perhaps as a reflex action of complete frustration. To be sure, the Communist leaders will not willingly court major devastation.

The difficulty will be to bring home to them that this is what they will be facing. They may well calculate that with the knowledge of certain Soviet retaliation, the President may recoil before the consequences of a nuclear tit-for-tat. And it does not matter whether this is "really" the case. If the aggressor so calculates deterrence will fail whatever our intentions.

This problem becomes particularly acute if we are forced to initiate nuclear retaliation in response to a fait accompli. In that case, every passing day would strengthen the aggressor's hold on his prize and confront us with risks before which the original issue may easily pale into insignificance. Indeed, the Soviets might then make seemingly moderate proposals which could expose us to nearly irresistible pressures from the neutrals and probably even from our allies.

It is also important to consider the impact on domestic opinion of the West, if the population comes to believe that for purposes of deterrence it has become a hostage of the aggressor. This will be particularly acute if finite deterrence is not coupled with a build up of forces suitable for limited war. Even then I would judge the growth of "peace at any price sentiment" one of the great dangers of the next decade.

In a situation of finite deterrence, the phrase "bring home the threat of general war" will lose a great deal of its significance. For what is brought closer is not very credible nor very meaningful strategically. The same factors which produce stable deterrence make escalation easier. The reduction of the incentive for surprise attack is purchased at the

price of increasing the incentive for local pressure. A finite deterrence posture will almost certainly have to be coupled with a substantial step-up of the limited war forces of the free world.

Indeed, it may even create a new problem for the retaliatory force. Heretofore it has been assumed that the main threat to the retaliatory force was a massive surprise attack. To me, this obsession with surprise attack seems more a vestige of the airplane age than a discription of the future. Under conditions of finite deterrence a strategic war of attrition becomes a possibility and perhaps the most serious danger, particularly against those forces based at sea. I do not think that our present command and control arrangements or our war plans are well designed for this contingency.

Enough has been said to illustrate my basic point: Each strategic option is purchased at some price, and unless that price is paid the option becomes ineffective. The choice between the various strategies need not be made formally. Indeed, I believe it more effective if the choice is made in relation to concrete situations rather than in reference to a theoretical dispute. It does seem to me very important, however, that there be sufficient advance planning to coordinate the delicate balance of diplomacy, threat, conflict, allied relationships and world opinion. Before turning to the problem of how to achieve this goal, I would like to make some brief observations about limited war.

### III. Some Observations about Limited War

A. The Forms of Limited War. The vagueness which adheres to the phrase "general war" is even greater with respect to the notion of "limited war." All policy papers pay lip service to the importance of limited war forces. But the meaning attached to this phrase varies widely. The prevalent notion is that any war in which United States and Soviet or Communist Chinese forces are engaged is general war by definition. In these terms, forces specially earmarked for limited war need to be only adequate for police-type actions like Lebanon. Any other scale of conflict, in this view, would be dealt with by some form of retaliation, limited or all-out.

This definition permits each service to enhance its favorite capabilities and it encourages a rivalry among the services for control over some retaliatory weapons. In the Air Force the retaliatory forces are declared, by definition, to be suitable for limited war as well, with the result that the tactical air force has only a restricted capability for conventional war. The Army has been ambivalent, oscillating between trying to build up its divisions and seeking to share in the general war forces either by means of active defense (Nike Zeus) or through medium-size missiles. The Navy has done a little of everything, with a foot in each camp. Too often, limited war is conceived as a form of limited retaliation.

One consequence is that the effort to build up forces for local defense in the free world has been neglected. Even NATO, which represents the area where the most sustained effort has been made, has

suffered from the proclivity towards a retaliatory strategy. As a result, the forces in Europe represent an uneasy compromise between the need for local defense and a form of adjunct to our strategic forces. Any effort to recast the NATO effort produces something like panic that the United States is withdrawing its nuclear shield (witness the reaction to the Rusk memorandum). Since the NATO problem is being dealt with by Mr. Acheson's task force, I shall not dwell on it further here.

It may be appropriate, however, to point out the weaknesses of various forms of limited retaliation that have been envisaged. It is, of course, possible to respond to local pressures by limited attacks on the Soviet homeland, either on military or on civilian objectives. To be successful, however, these measures depend on the ability to meet two requirements which in practice cancel each other out: (1) that the limited retaliation while increasing the risk of all-out war, is not an inevitable prelude to it; (2) that we are prepared to resort to general war rather than accept defeat, or what amounts to the same thing, acquiesce in a Soviet fait accompli. If we do not meet the first condition, there is the danger that the opponent will launch a pre-emptive strike. If we fail to satisfy the second condition, there is the risk that the aggressor may simply decide to outlast us, if only to demonstrate our impotence. For one such demonstration would guarantee the success of each future act of blackmail. This suggests that wherever we--or our allies--cannot intervene locally to prevent a fait accompli our position is almost certain to deteriorate--as the experience of Laos demonstrates.

Another conclusion is that we must reassess the notion that our local forces have as a primary function the goal of imposing a pause to permit time for negotiation. Of course, such a pause is highly desirable. But its effectiveness depends on the penalty for failing to come to terms during the pause. If the risk is general war, it may be that a pause can provide the mechanism for a settlement. However, as general war loses its strategic meaning, the issue may well depend on the aggressor's assessment of the resources available for local action. In short, the condition of finite deterrence will increase not only the likelihood of local pressure but its intensity and scope.

As a result, some of the prevailing conceptions about the role of ready forces seem to me to require restudy. Much of our planning has concerned itself mostly with the forces required for D-day and for a single crisis. If the above analysis is correct, more consideration should be given to the process by which local crises develop over time, particularly to the situation obtaining on D + 15, D + 30, D + 45, etc. I doubt that reserve forces will be of much use before D + 60, if then.

Equally important is the need for planning for two or more concurrent crises. It would seem to me highly likely that in the future we will be confronted with several crises simultaneously. We need only consider our posture if a crisis in Iran were to be added to the crisis in Laos. This kind of planning becomes all the more important because it would seem to me unwise to draw on our forces in Europe for Lebanon-style operations as we did in 1958. Such a procedure would weaken the most vital area at the moment of greatest tension. It would constitute an invitation to Soviet blackmail. It would almost guarantee that our forces would never be where they are most needed.

Finally, it is essential that we refine our understanding of how to use our military capability diplomatically without thereby making a show-down inevitable as was the case with the diplomacy leading to World War I. Equally important is to have standby plans for how to end a crisis. Any direct confrontation of the United States and the USSR will almost surely not end with the status quo ante. Indeed, if the crisis is sufficiently severe, it may provide the optimum opportunity for a comprehensive arms control scheme.

B. Nuclear and Conventional Forces: The Problem of Command and Control.

I have written elsewhere about my views on the balance between conventional and nuclear forces and there is little I could add to the purely strategic discussion here. (I am attaching a reprint of the article in question.) I would like to make two observations, however, one with respect to allied relationships, the other concerning command and control.

I believe that much greater emphasis must be given to conventional forces than heretofore. At the same time, we must take care that this shift of emphasis does not panic our allies or tempt the Soviets into rash acts. There has been a gap of about three to four years between our strategic thought and that of Europe (with Great Britain in an intermediate position.) As a result, our European allies are still very much under the influence of the massive retaliation doctrine. Any sudden change of course is likely to be interpreted by them, not as a reassessment of a common strategy, but as a harbinger of United States

disinterest in Europe. Moreover, while educating our allies in the basis for the new strategy, we must take care not to give the impression that we would prefer to be defeated by conventional forces rather than resort to nuclear arms. We must not produce the same overemphasis on conventional weapons that MC-70 brought about in the nuclear field. For this would set up an ideal situation for Soviet nuclear blackmail. If the notion that any nuclear war is unthinkable becomes accepted, the Communists could make any scale of conventional rearmament irrelevant by stating or implying that any war would inevitably be nuclear.

The above is, above all, a challenge for delicate diplomacy. There is another problem, however, of how to give effect to a greater reliance on conventional forces within our military establishment. As things stand now, it is my conviction--and that of most students of the problem--that in a conflict of any size the President may well lose control over the decision to employ nuclear weapons.

This is due to three factors: (a) the degree to which nuclear weapons have been integrated into the equipment and training of most units; (b) the de facto delegation of authority--particularly the possibility that local commanders or fleets-at-sea may resort to nuclear weapons if hard pressed; (c) the attitudes which have developed with respect to nuclear weapons within much of the services, that without nuclear weapons we would be fighting without our most efficient arms.

While it is theoretically true that the order to resort to nuclear weapons is reserved for the Commander-in-Chief, it is also the case that in most areas the hodge-podge of command arrangements is such that this may be without practical effect. A careful study will undoubtedly

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show that the capability for sustained nonnuclear action is very limited, so that we would very quickly reach the point where we would have the choice between yielding or nuclear war. Many of our tactical airplanes are not well designed for conventional war if they are capable of it at all. Most of them are too expensive for the attrition of conventional war. The question of command and control is complicated. It should be one of the priority items of a strategic reassessment.

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IV. Conclusions

A formal statement of our strategic requirements would go something as follows:

- a. We must have an invulnerable retaliatory force, which can be used in a carefully controlled, selective manner.
- b. We must have forces capable of resisting aggression which does not justify all-out war.
- c. We must be prepared to use both nuclear and conventional weapons, though we will make every effort to shift the responsibility for initiating the use of nuclear weapons to the other side.

The difficulty with these statements is that they leave vague the dividing line between the various categories of general and limited war, of nuclear and conventional weapons. They will thus tempt the services to continue on their present course of using an exegesis of vague formulae to press their favorite programs. This in turn means that for most concrete situations no truly common plans exist or that the plans which exist will have to be renegotiated under the pressure of events.

Moreover, the vagueness of these statements makes it difficult to achieve the synchronization between military and political measures without which events can easily get out of hand. The unfamiliarity of the new weapons, the penalties for miscalculation, the fact that the seemingly orthodox may be the most misleading, make advance planning imperative. Only by thinking through and in some cases exercising through possible responses to crisis situations can the political or the military leaders have confidence in the tools at their disposal.

On the other hand, an attempt to make the phrases "general war" or "limited war" or "nuclear war" more precise in theory will almost certainly provoke a violent dispute of theological intensity. The services and their supporters on Capitol Hill will be mobilized in a battle, the end result of which may not justify the cost.

This is particularly true of the problem of limited war. There is no such thing as a limited war in the abstract. There are only concrete situations of crisis and tension and conflict. Moreover, in all these situations, the political element is as crucial as the military. Or put another way, a strategy which cannot be turned into a tool of policy confuses ends and means.

The situation is complicated by the tendency of the military to act on the assumption that ~~they~~ will have to be able to conduct a war on the basis of purely military considerations, that their war plans are not properly speaking the concern of the civilian leadership. I believe I am correct in saying that under the Eisenhower Administration even the highest officials in the Defense Department had only the vaguest conception of JSCP (the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan), the closest thing we have to a definition of general war. Even if President Eisenhower read it, he did not take an active part in formulating it. Yet an intimate knowledge and shaping of the JSCP seems essential for all the nuances of threat, negotiation, and perhaps conflict which may arise. I cannot conceive that the political control of general war can be improvised under the pressure of events.

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The danger of permitting the military to develop plans on the basis of "purely" strategic considerations is well illustrated by the month preceding World War I. All General Staffs, and the German one above all, had developed plans whereby the political leadership had to give top priority to the requirements of mobilization. As a result, the political leaders lost effective control over events as soon as they began to commit themselves even to the threat of force. World War I became inevitable in July, 1914, partly because no one knew how to back off a mobilization posture or how to apply a nation's power in a politically controlled fashion. And it could not be ended, short of complete exhaustion for much the same reason.

I would therefore recommend the following steps in reassessing our strategic posture:

a. An analysis by the Defense Department, by your staff, and by yourself, of the JSCP to see whether it meets the requirements of control, selectivity, etc. laid down in the recent Defense Department memorandum. I believe that participation of your staff in the formative stages is important. Otherwise, you may be confronted with a shopping list in which control is confined to questions of magnitude rather than the more important problem of the underlying assumptions.

b. Some specific queries to the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the President of "unusual" general war situations both as a means to establish the interplay of political and military factors and as a tool of control. For example: If we wanted to conduct general war operations against the USSR alone and not Communist China, how would we go about it? What

specific measures would we take? Or what if we chose the reverse course? How can an accident be prevented from turning into general war? How could we get a pause in general war operations? What terms would we offer? It would not be too hard to design questions which would test the flexibility of our strategic planning. The mere act of answering them would tend to clarify the nature of general war.

c. This is even more true with respect to limited war. Here it would seem to me, the most fruitful approach would be in terms of concrete situations. For example, it might be useful to ask the JCS to supply an answer to the following question: "What are our requirements should we be forced to intervene in two concurrent crises in the Middle East (say, Iran) and in Southeast Asia (say, Vietnam) facing in each area five Soviet or Chinese divisions? This intervention is to be made without using forces now deployed in Europe or Korea. Describe the requirements for D-day and for each two-week period thereafter. The intervention is to be nonnuclear as long as possible. Describe the point at which the transition to nuclear war would be necessary and how it would be made."

Of course, this question can be put also in terms of individual cases. On the basis of the answers it should be possible to state political requirements which must be met. In reshaping the plans for these contingencies a limited war doctrine would emerge without the acrimony of a theoretical debate. At the same time, the exercise would give all parties a better sense of our capabilities.

d. Great attention should be paid to the transition points: to the prelude to intervention; to the shift from conventional to nuclear war and from limited nuclear to general war and above all to the possibilities for negotiation they afford. My preliminary review of the Berlin contingency planning indicates that the scenario for the actions prior to our probes and the follow-up should the probes be repulsed is far less advanced than the planning of the military actions themselves.

e. Our strategic planning must be synchronized with our disarmament planning, lest the two efforts paralyze each other. Also, we should be ready with a comprehensive scheme for ending the various crises that can now be foreseen if they should turn into actual conflict.

I am convinced that some such review should precede the planning for the next Defense Budget.